

# POLICY THEMES/ACTIONS

**Teacher Quality:** Teachers matter! Teacher effectiveness has a major impact on student achievement. In Tennessee research found that, all else being equal, students assigned to the most effective teachers three years in a row performed 50 percentile points higher- on a 100 point scale- than comparable students assigned to the least effective teachers for three years in a row (Sanders/Rivers 1996). Having a high quality teacher throughout elementary school can substantially offset or even eliminate the disadvantage of a low socio-economic background (Rivkin; Hanushek; Kain 2002).

Yet international comparative studies discovered that the process of becoming a teacher in the United States is “the least rigorous” (Ingersoll 2007; Wang 2003) when reviewing preparation programs and licensure requirements. In addition, “the data indicate that as many as half of those trained to be teachers never enter teaching and that 40-50% of those who do enter teaching leave the occupation altogether in the first five years on the job” (Ingersoll 2007). Teacher quality goes far beyond the federal measure of Highly Qualified Teacher. There are many aspects to consider that could help ensure that Vermont recruits, retains, and rewards teachers that meet or exceed our expectations for quality teachers.

## Policy Considerations:

- Define, adopt and implement a set of rigorous **teacher quality standards** that describe what Vermont defines as quality teaching practice
- Align **teacher licensure requirements** to the adopted quality standards
- Require local **districts to establish policy and practices** in regard to labor contracts, hiring practices, and teacher evaluations that align with Vermont teacher quality standards
- Establish a **performance based teacher evaluation system** (state level)
- Align college **teacher preparation programs** and in-service professional development with the teacher quality standards; make alignment a requirement for program approval/accreditation; require extended internships
- Institute a **tiered teacher licensure structure** and an incentive pay system for quality teachers (e.g. Beginner; advanced; teacher mentor) that is **based on ratings of individual teacher effectiveness** (The Tennessee Value Added Assessment system annually measures student progress in 5 subject areas and links it directly to assigned teachers; teacher effectiveness ratings reflecting student gains are the basis for pay incentives and for overall school performance reports.)
- Establish, train, and **require that teachers use “learning walks”** and professional teaching portfolios (as developed by the Institute for Learning @ the University of Pittsburg) for a select number of highly structured classroom visits from principals and peers for ongoing observation and feedback on teaching quality and continuous teaching improvement
- Establish a specific **mentoring and induction process for new teachers** (research has shown that new teacher attrition is reduced by half when new teachers participate in an induction process that includes a mentor in the same field; common planning time with other teachers; support from their principal/administrator; and participated in special new teacher in-service professional development)
- **Restrict out of field teaching assignments** (e.g. assigned to teach math when teacher has not completed a math major); nationally one third of all secondary math classes and a quarter of secondary English classes are taught by an out of field teacher (Ingersoll 2007)
- **Set teacher equity goals** that ensure that low achieving students are being taught by your highest quality teachers at the same rate as your high achieving students
- **Require substantive, work embedded professional development for licensing re-certification** rather than the present focus on credits and hours of workshops